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1960 Soviet Rocket Disaster Reported

LONDON, Oct. 16 (AP)—The Kremlin's hand could be successfully called during the 1961 Berlin crisis.

“fantastic” secret weapon that Nikita S. Khrushchev boasted of in 1960 was a nuclear-propelled rocket that blew up on the launching pad, killing the Soviet commander of rocket forces and 300 others, The Guardian said today.

The newspaper quoted from what it said were secret reports of Oleg V. Penkovsky, a Russian who was sentenced to death by a Soviet court in 1963 for spying for the West.

Victor Zorza, Communist affairs expert of The Guardian, apparently obtained an advance look at the spy's reports, which are being published soon under the title “The Penkovsky Papers” in Britain and the United States.

Mr. Zorza said Mr. Penkovsky had reported that former Premier Khrushchev's statement to the Supreme Soviet that a “fantastic” weapon was being developed had annoyed Soviet military men and forced a premature testing of the rocket.

In the fall of 1960, scientists assembled to rush through a test in time for the October Revolution anniversary, Mr. Zorza reported.

Explosion After 20 Minutes

“The countdown went according to plan,” Mr. Zorza said, “but the new missile failed to leave the ground. The observers waited for some 20 minutes, then came out of the shelter.

“At this point the missile exploded, killing 300 people, among them the commander-in-chief of the Soviet missile forces, Marshal [Mitrofan I.] Nedelin.”

On the diplomatic side, Mr. Zorza reported that the most important intelligence furnished by Mr. Penkovsky was that the

to duty and the West made it plain it would fight if need be. Mr. Khrushchev pulled back and gave the impression there was no hurry about signing the separate treaty.

Mr. Zorza said the United States Central Intelligence Agency had made Mr. Penkovsky's papers available for publication probably as part of a propaganda battle with Soviet intelligence agencies.

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